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CITY OF CHICAGO FORMS NEW COMMITTEE TO INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY FOR PASSENGERS WITH DISABILITIES AT CHICAGO'S AIRPORT

Department of Aviation Teams Up with Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities to Launch New First of its Kind Restroom to Enhance Accessibility at O'Hare

CHICAGO—People with Disabilities (MOPD) have convened a new advisory group aimed at optimizing accessibility features at both O'Hare and Midway International Airports. The Airport Advisory Committee brings together 10 members of government and advocacy groups to seek input from travelers with disabilities and identify opportunities for removing barriers, expanding accessibility features and making it easier to access Chicago's airports.

One of the newest airport accessibility enhancements opened this past month: a new fully equipped, accessible bathroom which makes O'Hare the first airport in North America to offer this level of service for disabled passengers.

"We are committed to working with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) and all our airport partners to provide the highest level of customer service for all passengers visiting Chicago's airports," said Jamie L. Rhee, Commissioner to the CDA. "With our capital programs focused on elevating the travel experience, we will work with experts of this Committee to advise on best practices in accessibility and how we can build better facilities that work for everyone. O'Hare's new Changing Places restroom is just the first step, and the Airport Advisory Committee will be the catalyst for additional innovations going forward."

The Committee has convened its first meeting, and will make recommendations on best practices for incorporating accommodations to meet the needs of all passengers flying through O'Hare and Midway. The Committee will look at ways to remove physical barriers, communications barriers, creating additional wayfinding signage, as well as the need for increased staff training. This includes evaluation of ADA and Title VI codes, set forth regulations for airport facilities across the country, and how Chicago can leverage and build upon them with modern new features to improve ease for travelers with disabilities.

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"We are pleased to launch the new advisory committee that will seek the input from travelers with various types of disabilities," said MOPD Commissioner Karen Tamley. "By listening to travelers and evaluating best practices in airport accessibility, we can move closer to our goal of making Chicago's airports the most accessible in the nation."

The new Changing Places Restroom was designed by the CDA, with input by MOPD, to better serve all travelers with disabilities and limited mobility. Located at O'Hare's Terminal 2, this specialized 110 square-foot facility is equipped with an adult, adjustable changing table, passenger lift system, an accessible roll-in and transfer shower, and accessible toilet and sink.

"We are very excited that Chicago has opened a Changing Places Restroom at O'Hare International Airport," said Sabrina Kimball, founder and CEO of Universal Changing Places, a grassroots movement geared at enhancing accessibility in public spaces. "This new facility provides everything needed by individuals who have self-care issues or are non-ambulatory in order to travel while having access to a changing facility that is safe and clean. We commend Chicago for leading the nation in this important step forward and for all its efforts to improve accessibility for people with disabilities. Way to go O'Hare!"

The facility features a motorized passenger lift with a detachable sling and ample space for maneuvering allows passengers who cannot stand or walk to use the restroom comfortably. These components, hallmarks of the Changing Places facility, exceed federal, state, and local regulations for accessibility provisions.

"This truly is a groundbreaking facility for O'Hare--the first of its kind specialized restroom (Changing Place) for disabled people for any airport in North America," said Tony Clough, MBE, Consultant, Changing Places, a leading advocacy group in the UK. "It is great to see that the airport and the City of Chicago have gone above and beyond the minimum requirements to encourage more disabled people their families and friends to travel by air."

The new Airports Advisory Committee will ensure that the City of Chicago increases accessibility for all members of the traveling public as both airports prepare to grow and modernize. The Committee will have its next meeting in February, and will guide its recommendations by first developing a framework for incorporating accessibility on airport facility projects.

In addition to the City of Chicago, a full list of members of the new Committee is below:

Access Living

ADA Great Lakes Center

Chicago Community Trust

Chicago Lighthouse

Equip for Equality

Helen Keller Center for the Deaf and Blind

Illinois Commerce Commission

State of Illinois

About the Chicago Department of Aviation; The Chicago Department of Aviation (CDA) is self-supporting, using no local or state tax dollars for operations or capital improvements at O'Hare and Midway International Airports. Chicago's airports offer service to over 260 nonstop destinations worldwide, including 47 foreign countries, combined. Together, Chicago's airports serve more than 100 million passengers each year, and generate approximately \$60 billion in annual economic activity for the region. Please visit www.flychicago.com to learn more about the Chicago Department of Aviation.

About the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities: The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) promotes total access, full participation and equal opportunity for people with disabilities of all ages in all aspects of life. It seeks to accomplish this mission through a multi-faceted approach that includes systemic change, education and training, advocacy and direct services. MOPD works to meet the diverse needs of the more than 600,000 individuals with disabilities who live and work in Chicago, and make Chicago the most accessible city in the nation.